



To: CINMS Advisory Council

From: Linda Krop, Conservation Representative

Re: Conservation Working Group Report, 3/21/06

The Conservation Working Group (CWG) met on March 21, 2006. Members present: Linda Krop, Chair (Environmental Defense Center); Greg Helms, Vice Chair (The Ocean Conservancy); Jean Holmes (League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara); Jim Knowlton (Ocean Futures); Phyllis Grifman (Sea Grant).

Other participants included Shiva Polefka (EDC Marine Conservation Analyst), John Dutton, Sarah Richmond, Laura McLendon.

CINMS staff: Mike Murray.

I. INTRODUCTIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introductions were made.

Linda announced that the CA Ocean and the World Conference will be held in Long Beach in September. The deadline to submit proposals for presentations and abstracts is April 14. EDC may submit a proposal and abstract that would highlight the successful partnership model developed by the CINMS and SAC, using the CWG and our issue reports as an example of how this partnership can help public agencies further policy, education and research objectives.

Linda also announced that the Revised Draft EIR for the Cabrillo Port LNG project is available, and explained how interested persons can obtain a copy of the report and submit comments.

II. □ CWG AQUACULTURE REPORT

Linda and Shiva introduced the discussion regarding our work on a report addressing open ocean aquaculture (OOA). The report will follow a format similar to our previous projects, in that it will address potential environmental impacts from OOA in general as well as specific impacts that may affect the CINMS; socioeconomic impacts; existing and proposed regulatory framework; identification of regulatory and management gaps; and recommendations for CINMS action.

EDC intern John Dutton reviewed the initial draft section on environmental impacts, and intern Sarah Richmond reviewed the draft discussion of the regulatory framework and issues. In May, we will provide additional information regarding these sections, and will present a draft socioeconomic section. We hope to have a complete draft report that we can present to the SAC in July. We will solicit comments and feedback from the SAC at that time, and incorporate such responses into a final report that we would like to present to the SAC for consideration in September.

III. MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Mike provided an update regarding the status of the Management Plan. NOAA director Lautenbacher has approved the public release of a proposed rule (re: regulatory changes). The CINMS still needs approval of the full Management Plan from the Dept. of Commerce and then can print the document and EIS for public review and comment. The plan and EIS may be available to the public as early as April. There will then be a 60-day public review period.

IV. FEDERAL MARINE RESERVES

Mike reported that the draft EIS is close to entering the clearance process. The draft EIS will include three spatial alternatives.

In addition, the PFMC is still considering additional fishing prohibitions within the CINMS. If such actions are taken, the CINMS reserves would probably only continue to exist where PFMC prohibitions do not exist. The CWG expressed strong support for CINMS reserves, so that protections will continue to exist in the event the PFMC does not enact fishing prohibitions or subsequently rescinds them.

V. □ □ SAC MEETING ISSUES OF INTEREST

- A. SAC WORK PLAN: Many of the issues identified by the CWG have been incorporated into the SAC Work Plan for 2006. CINMS staff will provide a report to the SAC on March 22 that summarizes the priorities recommended by SAC members.
- B. SAC ROSTER CHANGES: Mike announced new appointments for Tourism Alternate, Chumash Alternate, Recreation Fishing Member and Alternate.
- C. WATER QUALITY UPDATE: Linda reported that she, Shiva and Mike met with Donna Meyers to learn about her plans to follow up on the report and recommendations from the CWG's Water Quality Needs Assessment. Thanks to our work, Donna has been authorized to work on this issue! She will provide a presentation at the SAC meeting tomorrow, explaining how she plans to build on the work of the CWG. She proposes the following next steps: (1) further characterization of water quality (inc. quantitative and qualitative assessments);

(2) issue refinement; definition of goals and objectives for the CINMS; and (3) establish partnerships and planning groups.

- D. ACOUSTICS UPDATE: Mike reported on the initial results of acoustic monitoring in the Channel. The monitoring, conducted by the Scripps Institute, focused on ambient acoustics, as recommended by the CWG acoustics report. The initial results picked up marine mammal sounds, but also significant ship noise. The CINMS would like to expand the Automated Identification System (AIS) so that the noises can be matched to the actual ships so we can start to identify the noisiest sources in the Channel. The CINMS would like to have an additional AIS base station on Santa Cruz Island. The CWG supported this proposal.
- E. CINMS BUDGET UPDATE: Mike reported that the CINMS program 2006 budget was reduced by about 10% (32% of discretionary funds) from 2005. The CINMS expects to be funded at about the same level for fiscal year 2007. As a result of the budget reduction, the CINMS lost some staff positions and consolidated other assignments.
- F. MANAGER'S REPORT: Mike handed out the Manager's Report.